



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

CONTACT: Victor Bjornberg
Travel Montana
Montana Department of Commerce
(406) 841-2795

Marissa Kozel
Montana Department of Commerce
(406) 841-2772

**Experiencing Authenticity, Social Media, Geotravelers and the
Montana Brand Headline 09 Governor's Conference on Tourism &
Recreation**

Lt Governor Bohlinger Presents Tourism Awards

(HELENA) – Creating more demand for Montana's authentic experiences, gaining insights into the reason Montana's target market – Geotravelers – travel and effective use of Social Media as a tourism promotion tool are some of the topics national tourism and marketing experts will share with those attending the 2009 Montana Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation, March 30-31, at Helena's Red Lion Colonial Hotel. The image and uses of the new Montana Brand will be shared in various conference sessions.

Governor Brian Schweitzer and Montana Department of Commerce Director Anthony Preite are encouraging participation from the tourism and recreation industry and the media.

"The world's travelers are looking for authentic experiences, quality offerings with good value. Montana is the place and our tourism industry has been delivering that menu for years. With this year's conference agenda focused on helping create more demand for Montana's authentic experiences, I really encourage all involved in this important part of Montana's economy to attend," Governor Schweitzer said.

Montana Commerce Director Anthony Preite said "the current world economic situation makes it more important than ever for Montana to send an effective and inviting message to visitors and to exceed expectations when delivering our visitor services and products. The conference sessions are designed to help us all accomplish that."

Here's an overview of the 2009 conference agenda:

- **Monday, March 30, at 8:30 a.m.:** Nationally recognized author and business innovation strategist Jim Gilmore of [Strategic Horizons LLP](#) opens the conference with *Experiencing Authenticity in Montana*, an exploration of the principles for effectively

designing, managing and staging authentic experiences that add economic value to Montana's tourism & recreation offerings. Preparing for his Montana presentation, Gilmore said, "One would think that Montana has a leg up on nearly every destination in terms of offering authentic experiences. But the perception of authenticity does not automatically flow from resting on one's laurels and assuming the world knows what you know. The reputation as real has to be earned. I'm really looking forward to the opportunity to share some thoughts on how to create more demand for authentic Montana experiences."

- **Monday, March 30, at 10:30 a.m. and 1:45 p.m.:** Five concurrent sessions will be offered at these times. The topics covered in these 75 minute sessions include:
 - the latest Montana visitor research from UM's Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research (ITRR)
 - work sessions on Authentic Experiences with the morning's feature presenter Jim Gilmore
 - creating and strengthening employee engagement in your business and organization
 - "Green" and sustainable tourism business practices
 - Original Governor's Mansion Tour Field Trip
- **Monday, March 30, at Noon Luncheon:** Travel Montana's Brand Manager Angela Wong provides an update on the images and uses for the new Montana Brand. Montana grown and produced foods served.
- **Monday, March 30, at 3:30 p.m.:** Alexis Sanford of the Austin, TX –based [Spot Inquiry](#) has been working with Montana to delve further into the interests and motivations of its target visitor audience – Geotravelers. Her presentation offers insights into who Geotravelers are and their motivation for travel. "When you can really humanize a target group, then you can find ways to connect with them on their terms in the context of their real lives. Given the current economic reality, I think Montana has a unique opportunity to forge an even tighter connection with this group." Sanford specializes in brand strategy and consumer inquiry helping brands like Starbucks and Lexus align their products and communications in ways that matter to their audiences.
- **Monday, March 30, at 7:00 p.m. Montana Tourism Awards Banquet:** Montana Lt. Governor John Bohlinger helps celebrate the good works of our peers with the presentation of the Montana Tourism Person, Tourism Community, Tourism Event and Tourism Partnership of the Year Awards. Montana grown and produced foods served.
- **Tuesday, March 31, at 8:30 p.m.:** Susan Sweeney, [The e-Business Expert](#), escorts conference attendees through the neighborhoods of Social Media, demonstrating how tourism and recreation marketers can develop positive visitor relationships with these tools. "There are so many new and exciting opportunities opening up in the face of the social media boom it's hard to know where to start. My plan is to shed some light on all of the new advances in social media marketing. I'll work to help those attending the Montana conference get in the know about Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Blogs, podcasting and a whole lot more," Sweeney said.

- **Tuesday, March 31, at 10:30 a.m.:** Four concurrent sessions will be offered at this time. The topics covered in the 75 minute sessions include:
 - Social Media work session with the morning's feature presenter Susan Sweeney and Montana tourism marketing organizations
 - Publicity as a cost effective marketing tool
 - Glacier Park Centennial in 2010, the new Seven Lodges guidebook to MT's Indian Country and a preview of the 2009 National Folks Festival in Butte
 - Montana Film Industry's history and location promotion program

- **Tuesday, March 31, at 12:00 p.m. Luncheon:** The National Geographic Society's Center for Sustainable Destinations and south central Montana residents unveil the new Greater Yellowstone Geotourism MapGuide and website produced in partnership with Wyoming and Idaho tourism offices and residents. Montana grown and produced foods served.

The full agenda, registration materials, exhibitor and sponsor opportunities and more are available at www.travelmontana.mt.gov/conference. The \$140 conference registration fee is offered through March 19, and increases to \$160 through the conference dates.

Tourism and recreation is one of Montana's largest industries. In 2008, over 10 million people visited Montana spending \$2.7 billion during their stay. Almost 45,000 jobs are directly and indirectly supported by nonresident travel, resulting in over \$1 billion in total personal and proprietors' income for Montana residents.

###